

LOOK AND SEE FLEXIBILITY

Many times when older people look over their shoulder they turn their whole trunk. The danger is that if they turn their whole trunk while walking, the turn will alter their path. Try it yourself—stand up and look over your right shoulder. Do you turn only your head, or do you turn your shoulders and torso, too? Do the same test walking. When the entire torso turns while you are moving, it usually alters your route. Maybe you've had a similar experience on a bike. You look behind and without realizing it, you've also turned the handlebars in the same direction. Participants with stiff, tight, or sore necks, shoulders, or chests are more vulnerable to this kind of oversteering. Flexibility can make a difference, and this activity helps them experience that difference.

Discuss with them that this activity gets a little more flexibility out of their neck by using their eyes. Provide some background. Demonstrate yourself walking with a stiff neck. Whenever you turn your head to look at something, turn your body, too. Show and tell them that turning the trunk with the body alters the direction in which they walk. Walk a distance, look left, and start walking to the left. Look right and wander right. They'll quickly get what you mean. Talk to them a bit about driving and head turns. Will a head turn alter their route? Would a stiff neck keep them from seeing something important?

Benefits »

- Uses eye movement and visual targeting.
- Improves neck, shoulder, and trunk range of motion, useful for everyday movements.
- Separates head turns from torso turns.
- Increases participant safety while walking and driving.

How to Do It »

The Start

Begin and follow this activity with shoulder rolls and chest stretches. It will help and feels great.

The Moves

Use the following cues.

- Turn your head to the right as far as is comfortable. Note how far to the right you can see without pain.
- Turn just your eyes farther right. Does the head follow?
- When the eyes look farther right, the head can turn farther right.
- Turn the head left.
- Look a little farther with just the eyes. Then see if your head will turn a little further to follow.
- Look forward again.
- Did that work? Were you able to turn your head a little more using your eyes?
- Repeat with the other side.



- ◎ Can you *feel* how it works? Can you see how it works (i.e., look and see flexibility)?
- ◎ Repeat one or a few more times: Turn, look, turn more.
- ◎ Now, add the torso and arms to the turns. (Note: Trunk rotation may not be suitable for participants with osteoporosis.)
 - Turn the head.
 - Turn the trunk and keep the abs braced so the trunk moves as a unit.
 - Reach back with the same-side arm.
 - Look down the outstretched arm. The palm of that hand is their visual target.
 - Turn a little more through the trunk, if able. Notice that looking down the arm gives you a little more rotation.
 - Look and see.

Keep It Safe »

The head turns in this activity may cause dizziness. Participants should stop if they feel dizzy. Do head turns slowly and gently. Don't hold a head turn longer than a few seconds; each gentle turn should take no more than 3 to 5 seconds. Nothing should hurt.

Live It »

Visual targets can add a little more distance to neck turns. In small ways, this activity will help participants achieve better neck flexibility to walk and drive better and be safer.